

PLANNING COMMISSION

ACTION MINUTES

TUESDAY, JUNE 4, 2002

Chair Mathewson called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m. in the Twin Pines Senior and Community Center.

1. ROLL CALL:

Present, Commissioners: Chair Mathewson, Vice Chair Wiecha (VC), Parsons, Torre, Gibson, Feierbach, Frautschi

Absent, Commissioners: Torre (arrived at 7:06)

Present, Staff: Community Development Director Ewing (CDD), Principal Planner de Melo (PP), Zoning Technician Brian Fraelich (ZT), City Attorney Savaree (CA), Recording Secretary Szabó (RS)

Chair Mathewson opened by asking the Recording Secretary if she received any Request to Speak forms from the audience. There were none.

2. AGENDA AMENDMENTS:

Commissioner Parsons suggested they move agenda item at 1473 Sixth Avenue forward so the owners would not have to sit through the Commissioners' other discussions. All Commissioners agreed.

3. COMMUNITY FORUM (Public Comments): None

NEW BUSINESS:

6A. Consideration of request for extension of Single Family Design Review and Setback Variance granted by the Planning Commission on March 7, 2001 for 1473 Sixth Avenue.

PP de Melo opened with a presentation on this request for extension of a Single Family Design Review and Setback Variance entitlement that was granted by the Commission on March 7th of last year. The previous approval allowed construction of an approximately 2,493 square foot 3 story single family residence. The variance entitlement was to require a front yard setback from 15 feet to 10 feet and require a reduction in the required driveway length in the terms of that driveway apron. The code requires 18 feet and the applicants requested a driveway apron of 16 feet to allow construction of the proposed dwelling in order to protect 2 trees on site. Again, the Commission approved this project on March 7th of last year, there were no concerns raised by the public during the deliberation portion of the meeting, on March 7th of last year. Staff believes the request for extension is appropriate.

The applicant showed the model of the house to C Feierbach and C Frautschi. These were the only 2 Commissioners that had not seen the model since they were not on the Commission at the time the project was approved.

MOTION: By Commissioner Parsons, seconded by Commissioner Feierbach to approve the extension of Single Family Design Review and Setback Variance granted by the Planning Commission on March 7, 2001 for 1473 Sixth Avenue.

AYES: Parsons, Feierbach, Frauschi, Gibson, Torre, Mathewson, Wiecha

Noes: None

4. CONSENT CALENDAR:

It is at this time Chair Mathewson announced that there would be a new procedure implemented at the at each p/c meeting. He stated that when the recording tape has reached its end and needs to be turned over, discussion is to stop during the few moments it takes the recording secretary to turn the tape. When tape is again recording, discussion may resume. This new procedure is to assure that all comments will be recorded.

4A. Minutes of May 7, 2002

CDD Ewing stated that these are excerpt minutes from the May 21st Planning Commission meeting for 621 Masonic Way. He also stated that the minutes of the 7th and 21st must be approved tonight so they can be forwarded to the City Council for their review of the conditional use permit for 621 Masonic.

C Torre asked that the Recording Secretary be consistent when using the words "second" and "seconded" by. Also an item on Page 3 of the May 7th minutes regarding the new facility and the existing facility at Oracle as a center they are renting from the City of Belmont. She wanted to know if the statement made in these minutes was accurate.

CA Savaree responded to her question stating the tapes were in her office because the Council would be getting a transcript of the minutes. CA Savaree confirmed that the statement made in the minutes was correct.

MOTION: By C Gibson, seconded by C Frautschi to approve minutes of May 7, 2002.

Motion passed, with C Parsons abstaining.

4B. Minutes of May 21, 2002

MOTION: By C Gibson, seconded by C Frautschi to approve minutes of May 21, 2002.

Motion passed.

5. STUDY SESSION:

5A. Review of Tour Sites – City Council/Planning Commission Joint Meeting

CDD Ewing stated that about a year ago City Council and the Planning Commission agreed that it would be advantageous to put together a tour of the City of Belmont for the Council and the Commission. The city would rent a bus and tour the properties that had completed projects approved by Council/Commission. The tour would be useful for future project reviews and future changes to development standards. CDD Ewing suggested touring the sites that had Single Family Design Reviews approved by the Commission since the Single Family Design Review was created in 1998. He also suggested touring other sites that are not Single Family, but have also been approved by the Commission. CDD Ewing provided the Commissioners with a list of approved projects. He asked that from this list the Commissioners choose their top 10 or 12 sites they would like to tour, and this itinerary would be put together for late June/July.

Chair Mathewson stated that he had been to some of the sites recently and noted that several of the sites had not received their permits to begin work. He asked CDD Ewing if he could narrow down the list to sites that have already had permits issued. CDD Ewing said he would find out which sites on the list had already

pulled permits. C Parsons suggested that CDD Ewing also highlight the sites on the list that were also granted a variance. C Feierbach stated that since this list was in excel, CDD Ewing could e-mail a list to each Commissioner. The Commissioners could then add more fields or columns to the list. C Feierbach also stated that if any of the Commissioners have a particular development they admire that was not processed in the last five years, that they could add it to the list. Her example was Belmont Woods. C Torre seconded C Feierbach's thoughts that the Commissioners tour sites that are not just problems. C Torre also stated that it would indeed be a good idea to mark the sites on the list that had a variance or FAR. CDD Ewing said that the Commission should keep in mind the point of the tour. The sites should be viewed to see if the completed projects fit in with the neighborhood and did the project turn out how the Commissioners thought it would. VC Wiecha voiced a concern about being sure that those on the tour should know which projects had variances, or it would be hard to distinguish what is the impact of the variance versus what is a completely conforming project where just a design review was done. C Torre stated that if you can't tell whether a particular site had a variance granted, that would be a positive. C Feierbach added that those on the tour should view the site not just from the street view, but as a neighbor would view it. Chair Mathewson requested that perhaps before and after photos could be provided for the tour. CDD Ewing responded by stating that he would provide pictures on those sites that had pictures in the planning files. VC Wiecha wanted to know if the tour was going to be allowed to enter any of the premises? CDD Ewing said there would be no access to the interior of any of the sites. CDD Ewing said he was going to revise the list, and the Commissioners should provide staff with any additional sites they would wish to tour.

5B. Discussion of General Plan Update

CDD Ewing began with a PowerPoint presentation. He began by informing the Commission that he was asked to receive guidance from Council with regard to the General Plan update. Each Commissioner was provided a copy of the staff report the Council had received. Copies of the presentation are available upon request.

Chair Mathewson called for a recess at 8:21. Meeting resumed at 8:29.

5C. Report on Belmont Redevelopment Agency Projects

CDD Ewing stated that this staff report was based on questions from Commission regarding the Redevelopment Agency along with other projects the Agency is involved with, or preparing to undertake. The staff report also included the Council's priority list for all of the departments. There are a number of projects in Community Development, but also in Parks and Recreation and Public Works that the Commissioners have had or will have some involvement in. CDD Ewing also stated that the list includes updates on the projects in Community Development beginning with the General Plan Update through the Grading Ordinance. He also stated that the Planning Commission does not have a role in redevelopment. The Council acts as Redevelopment Agency and the Commission's role is the same role it is with any other proponent of development. The Agency can propose development and the Commission would then review it against the Zoning Ordinance and the General Plan.

CDD Ewing added that some of the projects that will be coming before the Commission are the Emmett House Renovations, Market Façade Rebate Program and the Block 4 Development. He further stated, regarding the Block 4 Specific Plan, the Council and the Agency said they would spend \$200,000.00 for Specific Plan for the northwest corner of Ralston and El Camino. Depending how the Council/Agency proceeds with that, they may accord the Commission a role in the development of that Specific Plan. CDD Ewing said in regard to the Downtown Specific Plan, the Commission needed to make a judgement call on whether it was complete or obsolete, since the Plan was adopted in 1990. He added the Commission would also be involved in the Harbor Industrial Annexation proposal. They would be looking at the M1 and ME zones that have been applied in a preliminary pre-zoning of the Harbor Industrial Area. The Commission might want to look at the changes to the M1 zone in light of some of the property owners' concerns about annexation. He further stated that the Council is very interested in coming to an agreement with the property owners to annex that end of the City. The property owners voiced some concerns about the County Zoning, Belmont's zoning, and San Carlos's zoning for light industrial.

Next item was Low and Moderate Income Housing priorities. CDD Ewing stated that the Agency would have to consider how it wants to spend its LMI money. The Agency purchased some properties with the LMI money, and they will have to decide if they want to use the properties for housing, or reimburse the fund. For instance, the 1355 Fifth Avenue block, the parking lot directly across from City Hall is also an affordable housing property, as are the 3 lots on the corner of O'Neill and Sixth, which will be the destination site of the Emmett House. CDD Ewing said that Council has directed the Agency to work on Design Review and the Grading Ordinance.

Chair Mathewson stated that he was one of the people that requested that this item be put on the agenda. He seemed to sense quite a bit of enthusiasm from the Belmont Citizens in regards to developing the Downtown area. He requested a discussion in the future on the topic of Block 4, and the Old County Road area. He further suggested that after the discussion, if interest merits, the City might want to bring in a consultant to put together a "Downtown Development Plan". We might want to put together another ad-hoc committee for this item, too. C Feierbach stated that at the last Commission meeting a member of the audience told her that the Downtown area was "embarrassing". The resident further stated that she couldn't even bring her friends to the Downtown area, for example Block 4. C Feierbach suggested that Block 4 should be rehabed. She said that the Commission should let the Agency know how they feel about Block 4. C Torre stated that she wasn't sure if all the RDA money could be used for the downtown area. C Parsons said the RDA money could be used anywhere in the Redevelopment Agency area. CDD Ewing stated that these monies cannot be used for government buildings, however, they can be used for Police facilities. He stated further that the Council has all the power on how these funds will be used. He also added some of the Council/Agency members acknowledged that Old County Road was an area of blight, which justified the Redevelopment Agency formation. But ultimately, they (the Agency) decide how the funds will be used. VC Wiecha stated she agreed that the Commission should look at the master plan for the specific area between Old County Road and El Camino, and Sixth and Ralston.

VC Wiecha asked staff to find out if there were any applications to MTC or any lobbying to receive any monies to re-develop the blighted areas. CDD Ewing replied by stating that the City of Belmont is taking no action to go after the grants because they require a commitment to developing at a density of 25 units to the acre or higher. VC Wiecha then asked if Council made a decision not to pursue this matter any further because of the 25 unit requirement. CDD Ewing said that Council had not made that determination. He stated that the Mayor said at a recent meeting that 25 units to the acre was too high a density, that he could not support it. VC Wiecha said she felt the City missed a good opportunity in not trying to get the grants. She said it was unfortunate that that discussion was not made in the public forum. CDD Ewing said he would like to make clear that our Zoning Ordinance and General Plan didn't support that kind of density either, and the Zoning Ordinance and General Plan are our public input, that gives us direction. He further stated that the Council has had several discussions about the Downtown area. The few times the City Manager has approached Council as to whether they wished to re-plan and get into a redefinition of downtown, along the lines of a much more active core land area, the Council turned him back twice. CDD Ewing added this was pretty clear to staff, so they are not going to pursue 25 units to the acre projects or do substantial Downtown planning until the Council says otherwise.

VC Wiecha said that maybe this was something the Commission might want to revisit when the Commission does its value assessment, because it may be an opinion of certain individuals, but perhaps not the preponderant opinion of the citizens of Belmont. She also stated that the suburban blight we see along the El Camino corridor is partially due to the fact that there is no core residential community and there is no mixed use to provide a feeling of life after 5:00 p.m. She said that this contributes to the traffic problems and struggling businesses. She said it would be appropriate to look at the values for that area as part of the General Plan process.

VC Wiecha stated that a few years ago there was a proposal to relocate and do the associated retrofit work on the Emmett House. That proposal penciled out over a million dollars of additional investment above and beyond what was spent on the property already. This project never penciled out and the Emmett House was left where it is located now. She asked that since the Commission has a project they are looking at located next door, at the atrium, what is the potential success of this renewed effort to relocate Emmett House, and what is the process for how it's going to be moved forward? She also asked staff if there would be another engineering and architectural assessment?

CDD Ewing stated that this is in the hands of the Agency to exercise. At any time along the process they could stop it. But the Agency said to prepare to move the Emmett House. That was the direction they gave

staff to follow. He added that staff is preparing a contract to bring back to the Agency with Mike Garavaglia and Associates, historical architect, to prepare the "recipe book" for moving it. All that is known at this point is that the Agency told staff to move the Emmett House. VC Wiecha asked how much that effort is costing the RDA. CDD Ewing stated that he expects the move to cost about \$20,000.00 dollars, but he has not received the final proposal yet.

VC Wiecha said her concern was that when Emmett House is moved and the Atrium project goes through, the City would be left with a tiny piece of property. She continued with the suggestion that if this property were merged with the doctor's property at the Atrium it would be much more developable. CDD Ewing stated that property doesn't adjoin the Atrium property. There is a driveway between them, and that the driveway is privately owned, it is part of the Belmont Center. CDD Ewing added that the Emmett House move, and what will go on the empty lot, is a complicated project as the site is too small for almost anything. The current plan is to place a few LMI units there. If this is not done, the LMI Fund will have to be paid back.

VC Wiecha commented that she would support any effort to move the Block 4 project forward. C Torre noted that she believes this City has a bit of a knee-jerk reaction about density. She stated further that whenever a developer comes before them, the Commission always wants less density. She added if the City wants things to change, it will have to rely on private people willing to invest money. One of the places this can be considered is right next door to where you have public transportation. She also stated that she would like to see Block 4 fixed.

C Parsons asked what the RDA's plans were regarding the Plaza next to the Railroad station. CDD Ewing answered by stating that a Park will be going in at that site, and it will be going up for review with the Council soon.

Chair Mathewson asked the Commission if anyone is interested in setting up a sub-committee to discuss these things. CDD Ewing stated that the Commission has limited authority to initiate such projects, but each Commissioner could individually speak to a Council Member and voice their opinion about how they feel about which areas they would like money to go into. CA Savaree commented that the Commission could make a general statement to the Council about what the Commissions concerns are, but that the Commission should not set up sub-committees without the Councils approval. CDD Ewing added that the Commission needs to decide what they want to do with the areas discussed at this meeting before they present any suggestions to the Council. The Commission decided they would make some suggestions regarding Block 4 and the Plaza to the Council in written form. Chair Mathewson volunteered to write the letter to the Council. C Gibson suggested that mention should be made in the letter that projects that the community has been promised would be completed, should be addressed.

7A. Status Report from Protocols Ad-hoc Sub-Committee

VC Wiecha reported the sub-committee was 60% complete with the editing of the 18 page protocol document.

VC Wiecha asked CDD Ewing to provide a report on the status of what is being done about the Ross Lighting site, as it was demolished some time ago and nothing has been done since. CDD Ewing said he would provide the Commission with a report at the next meeting. He added that they have activated their plan check and he expects they will be taking a building permit soon.

PUBLIC HEARINGS: None

OLD BUSINESS

REPORTS, STUDIES, UPDATES, AND COMMENTS

CDD Ewing announced that the Belmont Lot Merger Program won the Northern Section APA award for implementation in a small jurisdiction. The award will be given out on Friday June 21, 2002 at the Fort Mason Officers Club in San Francisco.

ADJOURNMENT:

The meeting adjourned at 9:45 p.m. to a regular meeting on Tuesday, June 18, 2002 at 7:00

Twin Pines Senior and Community Center.